

BattleCry Counter-Rally 2007

Speeches by [Chuck Cannon](#), [Mark Thomas](#), and [Don Havis](#)

On Friday, March 9, 2007, thousands of supporters of "[BattleCry](#)" descended on San Francisco near City Hall to rally for their cause. A counter-rally was held, in which several Atheists were part of. These are the speeches given by three of them.

Chuck Cannon

Good afternoon.

My name is Chuck Cannon. I am a member of the Freedom From Religion Foundation, which is an educational group that works to promote the constitutional principle of separation of state and church. You can visit their website at FFRF.org, and listen to their podcasts at Freethought Radio. I am here today, not to speak for them, but to represent a much larger group, and that group consists of every American who is concerned about preserving the principle of equal rights for all.



As a person who cherishes freedom, I would first like to defend BattleCry in their quest for family values. They should have, and are indeed entitled to their family values. BUT, that is where it belongs, ... IN THEIR FAMILY, ... and should not be imposed onto OTHER people's families. The reality is, there is NOTHING they are seeking, that they are prevented from practicing within their own family right now! It is when they attempt to impose their narrow and repressive values on everyone, that it becomes everyone's duty to stand up, it becomes everyone's duty to speak out, and it becomes everyone's duty to take action.

BattleCry's values are NOT Constitutional values. They do not represent the principles upon which our country was founded. This government of the people was not founded on religious texts. It was not founded on the Qu'ran. It was not founded on Vedic Scriptures. It was not founded on the Navaho medicine man, or the Apache Buffalo God, it was NOT founded on the Book of Mormon ... and it certainly was not founded on the evangelical bible. Our country was founded upon the principles of the Constitution, which claims NO chosen people, honors NO religious elite, and gives equal credence to the religious as well as the non-religious.

Hiding behind 'god's love' in order to push an agenda of intolerance and exclusion, is neither godly nor loving. The participants of BattleCry are not following the word of god ... They are following the word of cult-like leaders who pervert the power of religion into a divisive political strategy.

The militant title 'BattleCry', and their military themes of: 'battle plans', warriors', 'god's army', ... and souvenir dog tags, constitute an insult to our Armed Forces. The real military is

made up of brave individuals, who, a generation ago, sacrificed their lives wading onto the bloody beaches of Anzio, and Normandy. They suffered torture and torment on the death filled road from Bataan. They did this because they knew that democracy was worth defending, and far too valuable to allow it to be degraded into the repressive theocracy that is the blueprint of groups like BattleCry. They fought an Emperor god so that future generations might live free from emperor gods. They fought Nazis whose belt buckles were emblazoned with the words “Got mit uns” ... God is with us! God was not with them, and god is not with BattleCry!

No group should be allowed, by political extortion, and deception to force their narrow repressive views upon everyone. Liberty and justice means liberty and justice FOR ALL. All means gay, all means straight, all means religious, and all means non-religious. Evangelicalism, in this virulent and militant form, has no place in American society.

Yet, I do not harbor bad feelings towards the young people who will fill the stadium and fall under the trance of the cult of BattleCry, where they will be misled into thinking they are warriors for god, and where they might be asked to recite in prayer: “I will keep my eyes on the battle, ... even when I don’t understand”! It is a hallmark of cults to demand obedience without understanding why. I view them as unfortunate victims who are being manipulated, ... and amid the noise of Christian rock bands, and group strength mentality, it all must feel pretty good.

There is hope, however. The net result of religious extremism is that many young members are leaving the movement. Despite the packed megachurches, the political clout and the increasing visibility on the national stage, teenagers are abandoning the faith in droves.

At a series of meetings in 44 cities last fall, more than 6,000 pastors heard dire forecasts that if current trends continue, only 4 percent of teenagers will be Bible-believing Christians as adults.

I hold hope that some among the visitors to San Francisco this weekend, will rise up to a level of reason and clear thinking. That they will see that goodness does not require obedience to self-proclaimed authorities, see that morality comes from within, and that social harmony is not achieved through militancy.

I hope someday they will join us, and the world can live as one.

Mark Thomas

Battle Cry is right about one thing. Values and morals are important. Values and morals determine how we act towards each other in a society. The question is, where should we get our values and morals?

Should we get our values and morals from an ancient book?



This book tells many stories of killing. They often killed everyone in a city or village. Sometimes they just killed the men, boys, and nonvirgin women -- keeping the virgin women and girls as slaves. In one story, almost everybody and everything on the planet was killed.

This book is also full of death penalties for the slightest infractions:
They would execute people for working on the wrong day of the week.
They would execute sons for being stubborn and rebellious.
They would execute anyone who cursed his parents.
They would execute anyone who attacked his parents.
They would execute adulterers.
They would execute male homosexuals.
They would execute prostitutes.
They would execute a family member or friend who suggested worshipping the wrong god.
They would execute everyone in an entire town, for worshipping the wrong god.
They would execute people they thought were witches.
They would execute false prophets.
They would execute sons for the sins of their fathers.
They would execute non-virgin brides.
They would execute unbelievers.
They would execute blasphemers.
The list goes on ...

And, in what many consider the greatest story in this book, a man was tortured to death as a substitute for the supposed crimes of everybody else.

This man was supposedly the savior of all mankind. He was perfect and could do no wrong. But, even this savior told a story where a slave owner cuts a slave into little pieces -- just because the owner was mad at the slave. This savior also vowed to turn family members against each other and said that his disciples must hate their families.

And people have the audacity to call this the good book!

Where should we get our values and morals? We should get them from the basic human kindness that most people have. We should get them from the love and cooperation that are necessary for our species to survive. No gods or holy books are necessary. We can all love and care for each other -- if we so choose.

Don Havis

Dear brothers and sisters: I have a terrible confession to make. I feel compelled to make this confession to you, primarily because, like Brother Ted Haggard, I have already been "outed." Okay. Here goes. Ready ... drum roll ... I am a HOMO SAPIEN BIBLIOPHILE! Yes, I confess. I am a human being who loves



books—especially books that discuss a science-based, rational view of this world, and how to live a satisfying, productive life in harmony with this real world. I want to take a moment to share with you, and to highly recommend, a few books in this subject area which I have recently read.

The God Delusion, by Dr. Richard Dawkins, The End of Faith, by Sam Harris, Letter to a Christian Nation, also by Sam Harris, Breaking the Spell by Dr. Daniel Dennett, and God, the Failed Hypothesis, by physicist, Dr. Victor Stenger.

These are just a few of the many recent books on the general subject area of living one's life based on scientific, factual information as opposed to living one's life based on magical thinking, so-called "revealed knowledge," or faith.

For this second optional way of living—that advocated by pretty much the entire range of Christian sects (denominations)—there is but one book: the "Buybull."

Here is my simple point:

Most human beings living in this corner of the world, who are past the age where they can reason for themselves fairly effectively—say about 12 to 16 years old—have a choice about which path they want to take as a basis for living an effective, compassionate, moral, productive life. Incidentally, one of my main objections to the whole BattleCry enterprise is that they snag the youngsters at about ages eight or nine, in order to begin the brainwashing process before they are able to reason effectively. My main point, however, is that those over the "age of reason" can EITHER stand with science, reality and reason, OR they can base their life choices on ancient risen-sun-god myths and punitive codes of behavior written by ignorant bronze-age nomads more than eighteen hundred years ago, before there was even any such thing as "science" or the scientific method.

Those who say that there is no essential conflict between science and faith are simply misinformed. Listen carefully to the words of the Catholic Father of the Reformation, Martin Luther: "Reason must be blinded and destroyed. Faith must trample underfoot all reason, science, and understanding; and whatever it sees must be put out of sight and ... know nothing but the Word of God."

Therefore, I urge all San Franciscans and all those who may hear or see this message to take a stand for reason, reality and science, AND to take a stand against the intolerant, homophobic, misogynistic, militaristic, and simply misinformed message of BattleCry.

Yes, it is their civil right to assemble and to spread their delusional "word." But, I say, tell them to take their message elsewhere ... maybe Manteca or Oshkosh. Tell them there are simply too many Homo Sapien Bibliophiles here in San Francisco to take it.